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Supporting place-based policy making in European Structural Investment Funds

Welcome to the first issue for 2018 of the European Structural and Investment Funds journal. This special issue focuses on the use of integrated place-based approaches within European Structural and Investment Funds programmes within the 2014-20 programme period. The support for an integrated place-based approach in the ESIF regulations consists of three main features:

- ring fenced ERDF funding for sustainable urban development (a minimum of 5 percent);
- more decision making powers for urban authorities, in particular in relation to project selection; and
- the introduction of new tools (Integrated Territorial Investment and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)) to support implementation.

The emphasis in the regulations is on flexibility and as such there is scope for variations between countries and within countries of how and to what extent the provisions are implemented. These variations includes differences in terms of the design of the strategies, the type of territories that are targeted, the thematic focus of the strategies, the way in which integrated place-based approaches are governed, and the type of indicator, monitoring and evaluation systems that are used.

The scope for flexibility is necessary to effectively support integrated place-based approaches in a bottom-up manner. However, it also raises certain challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies. These challenges are amplified by the limited data that is currently available regarding the design, management and implementation of the strategies.

In 2016 the European Policies Research Centre on behalf of the European Commission (DG Regio) commissioned a study which aimed to analyse the implementation of the integrated place-based strategies within sustainable urban development under Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation, Integrated Territorial Investments and Community-Led Local Development (when CLLD is closely linked to territorial and urban strategies). The project had the following objectives:¹

- to collect all the relevant individual urban and territorial strategies that have been developed in accordance with the new territorial provisions;
- to establish a database with a minimum of 400 strategies with comparable factual information based on the above;
- to identify good practices in the use of the new territorial provisions based on an in-depth analysis of a sample of 50 strategies;
- to analyse differences and similarities among the set-up and implementation of the 50 urban and territorial strategies and identify factors that explain them; and
- to outline a methodology for measuring the effectiveness of these new provisions in the coming years (contained in a separate report).

The articles in this special issue are based on the findings from this study. The first article (*Arno van der Zwet and John Bachtler*) provides an overview of integrated place-based approaches, including the

¹ Van der Zwet, A., Bachtler, J. Ferry, M., McMaster, I. and Miller, S. (2017) Integrated territorial and urban strategies: how are ESIF adding value in 2014-2020?, available on: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2017/12/21-12-2017-study-integrated-territorial-and-urban-strategies-how-are-esif-adding-value-in-2014-2020

background of place-based approaches and methodological approach. The article gives an outline of the financial allocations and an overview of important differences in terms of implementation between and within countries. It also considers some of the key drivers that explain the choices made by Member States.

A second set of five articles consists of country reviews. Each of the articles provides an overview of the implementation of ESIF-funded integrated place-based approaches and provide a specific example of a strategy in that country. The countries represent a geographical spread of approaches and particularly include those countries where the introduction of the strategies has led to some innovative features.

In the first of these country reviews, *Marie Feřtřová* discusses the implementation of ITI in the Czech Republic and specifically looks at the case of Brno metropolitan area, where the ITI instrument has provided a new impulse for collaboration. Second, *Heidi Vironen* considers the somewhat unique case of Finland, where the ITI mechanism is used to facilitate inter-city cooperation between the country's largest cities. In the third country review, *Eleftherios Antonopoulos* focuses on Greece, and specifically the urban area of Patras, where the ITI instrument has led to a new integrated plan for a diverse range of geographical areas in the city. Fourth, *Martin Ferry and Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak* compare the functional urban areas of Katowice and Lublin in Poland, which both use ITI but have adopted different implementation models. In the final country review, *Stephen Miller and Arno van der Zwet* present a comparative study of two ITI strategies, London and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in the United Kingdom.

The challenges involved in assessing the achievements of integrated place-based strategies are then explored in the article by *Martin Ferry and Irene McMaster*. Their article then review existing methodological approaches to assessing territorial provisions under Cohesion policy, and explores emerging approaches to the assessment of territorial and urban strategies. The article outlines options for developing frameworks for future assessments and presents recommendations on a framework and approach for measuring effectiveness.

As previously mentioned, the articles making up the special issue part of this journal are based on the EPRC study for DG Regio on integrated place-based strategies within sustainable urban development under Article 7. Also included in this issue, and on a related theme, *Eduardo Medeiros* discusses the contribution EU Cohesion Policy has made to supporting territorial development strategies in Portugal in the last couple of decades. Based on the identification of the main drivers of territorial development, and on the use of a wide range of data, he discusses the positive and negative effects of EU Structural and Cohesion Funds in supporting national and regional development in Portugal.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors for their contributions to this special issue, and I hope that EStIF readers will find this collection useful.

Arno van der Zwet

Guest Editor